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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. MROZIEWICZ	(Poland)
later:	Mr. ALPMAN (Vice-Chairman)	(Turkey)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 47 to 65 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

The CHAIRMAN: Before the Committee hears the first speaker, I should like to make the following statement.

This afternoon, the Committee, in accordance with its programme of work and its timetable, will conclude its general debate on all disarmament agenda items. A number of delegations have approached me concerning a further extension of the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on disarmament items. The officers of the Committee having considered the matter carefully, I should like to suggest an extension of the deadline until noon on Friday, 1 November, to enable delegations to conclude their consultations successfully.

I should point out that if the Committee takes a decision along the lines that I have suggested we shall have to be mindful of the resulting time constraints. Accordingly, I appeal to all delegations that are involved in the negotiations on draft resolutions to make every effort to conclude those consultations and to submit draft resolutions as soon as possible.

Furthermore, if the Committee is amenable to this deadline extension it will be on the clear understanding that I shall adhere strictly to it and that there will be no further extension.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee agrees to extend the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions until noon on Friday, 1 November.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: In view of this adjustment in the programme of work I further suggest that, instead of proceeding to the next phase of our work tomorrow, as was planned, we begin that phase on Friday, 1 November. This would mean that the Committee would not meet tomorrow, and I hope that the time thus made available would facilitate any consultations that might be required.

According to the revised programme, 22 meetings would be available for the next phase of the Committee's work - from 1 November to 15 November. In that connection I have conducted a series of consultations with the officers of the Committee, and, as a result, I wish to propose the following programme of work for the period 1 November to 15 November.

(The Chairman)

From Friday, 1 November, to Thursday, 7 November, a total of 10 meetings would be devoted primarily to the introduction of and comments on all draft resolutions under disarmament agenda items, that is, items 47 to 65. At this stage, I should like to urge those delegations wishing to introduce draft resolutions or to make comments on them during those 10 meetings to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Starting Friday, 8 November, the Committee will proceed to take decisions on draft resolutions under the various disarmament agenda items. I should like to inform members that I shall try to present to the Committee on Tuesday, 5 November, a paper grouping together various draft resolutions in several clusters, on the basis of which the Committee can proceed to take decisions on draft resolutions cluster by cluster.

If I hear no objection, may I take it that the suggested programme of work and timetable that I have just outlined for the second phase of the Committee's work is acceptable to the Committee?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: We shall now continue the general debate.

Mr. KORUTURK (Turkey): This session of the General Assembly is taking place against the background of far-reaching developments of historical significance affecting international peace and security. Even as the world ushers in a new era of cooperation and optimism following the end of the cold war, we are faced with a great many new challenges and uncertainties which characterize times of profound change.

The radical transformation of the nature of East-West relations is at the root of the metamorphosis of the world political order. The most striking manifestation of this has been the spirit of cooperation displayed by the

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international community during the Gulf crisis. Indeed, the resolute collective response of the world community to the invasion of Kuwait would not have been easily achieved without the elimination of the antagonism between East and West which in past decades constituted a major impediment to the effective functioning of the Security Council.

In this vein, the international Middle East conference that opened today in Madrid is yet another political event of historical significance testifying to this new spirit of cooperation. We hope that the conference will yield positive results so as to initiate a genuine peace process in the region after more than 40 years of constant conflict and tension.

The new atmosphere of confidence prevailing in the European continent already had a positive effect on the work of the First Committee at its last two sessions. The momentous political developments in Europe have continued at a rapid pace since our last general debate in this Committee. Following the revolutionary political changes which took place in Central and Eastern Europe, there has been encouraging, though uneven, progress towards the consolidation of democracy and economic reform in that part of the continent.

In November 1990 the process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) broke new ground when three historic agreements were concluded at the summit meeting in Paris. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed; the CSCE participating States endorsed the 1990 Vienna Document on confidence- and security-building measures; and they adopted the Charter of Paris for a New Europe - a document formally sealing the end of the cold war.

The CFE Treaty, with its full array of limitations and stabilizing measures and its far-reaching verification regime will be a cornerstone of the

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future European security architecture. Together with its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Turkey welcomed last June the agreement reached by the United States with the Soviet Union for a resolution of the problems that had arisen concerning the interpretation of the CFE Treaty, thus paving the way to its early ratification and entry into force. Turkey also welcomes the important progress made in the field of confidence- and security-building measures as enshrined in the Vienna Document. The important contribution of confidence-building measures to arms limitation and disarmament efforts has now been established by their effective implementation in Europe.

The signing by President Bush and President Gorbachev at the Moscow summit last summer of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), envisaging deep reductions in the strategic nuclear forces of the two most important nuclear-weapon States, was a further major step in the area of nuclear disarmament. Turkey welcomes the START Treaty as an important milestone on the road to substantial and balanced nuclear arms reductions. This timely event complements and reinforces the process of genuine arms reduction that was inaugurated with the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty). Meanwhile, with the removal of the last intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe, the implementation of the INF Treaty, which eliminates a whole class of nuclear weapons, has been successfully completed.

Soon after the conclusion of the START Treaty, President George Bush announced, on 27 September, a bold new initiative concerning a series of unilateral reductions in United States nuclear deployments world-wide, coupled with some arrangements aimed at confidence-building. The initiative includes

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a number of far-reaching measures which we welcome. Those measures are in harmony with the principles defined by the NATO Heads of State and Government at their summit meeting in London in July 1990, when they mandated a fundamental review of the alliance's political and military strategy in the light of the changes that have reshaped the face of Europe. The measures will constitute a major contribution to the establishment of peace, stability and security at significantly lower levels of armaments in Europe and the world.

We should also like to voice our satisfaction at the positive, appropriate response by President Gorbachev to the measures announced by President Bush. The unilateral cuts in the Soviet nuclear arsenal and further proposals announced by the Soviet leadership brought a satisfactory answer to the expectations of the world community. They will be a major step in the process of disarmament towards a more secure and stable world order. Furthermore, the assurance by President Gorbachev that all Soviet nuclear weapons will remain under the control of the central authority is of utmost importance. Most recently, it was encouraging to hear the United States and Soviet Presidents declaring during their joint press conference yesterday in Madrid that the arms-control schedules of both sides were indeed very close to each other. We express the hope that other nuclear-weapon States will follow in the steps of the United States and Soviet initiatives.

A Conference for the amendment of the partial test-ban Treaty was held in New York in January 1991. The diverging views on the degree of priority to be given to the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban prevented the Conference from reaching consensus. However, this should not lead to pessimism, since a clear trend exists towards limiting nuclear testing, as shown by the decreasing number of actual explosions.

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Two important verification protocols - one to the 1974 threshold test-ban Treaty and the other to the 1976 peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty - which had been signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in June 1990, were recently ratified by both countries. We understand that the United States and the Soviet Union will also discuss bilaterally the prospects for further limitations on the number and yield of nuclear test explosions. In the multilateral context, we welcome the re-establishment this year of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament on a nuclear-test ban and note that the issue of nuclear testing continues to be an important item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

My country considers the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty to be one of the most crucial multilateral disarmament agreements yet concluded, with over 140 States parties to it. We welcome the accession of more States to the Treaty. In this respect, we commend Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe for having recently become parties.

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We also consider it very important that France and China have declared their intention to accede to the Treaty. The adherence of France and China will mean that all five permanent members of the Security Council, which are also the five declared nuclear-weapon States, will have become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This will significantly enhance the stature and strengthen the universality of the Treaty. We hope that other States that have not yet acceded to the Treaty will follow their example and be more forthcoming in this matter. By reducing the risk of nuclear war the Treaty has contributed to international security and arms control. As a party to the Treaty, Turkey holds the view that strict adherence to Treaty provisions by both nuclear and non-nuclear parties, is of vital importance. The non-proliferation regime of the Treaty should be further reinforced, in particular, by improving the implementation of safeguards.

In this connection we would like to commend the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the implementation of the non-proliferation Treaty. We should also like to pay a tribute to the work of the United Nations Special Commission in implementing Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

In the aftermath of the Gulf War international concerns have focused on halting the proliferation of all kinds of weapons in the Middle East while supporting the legitimate need of every State to defend itself.

The search for new security structures and measures in the Middle East with a view to promoting peace in the region should aim at establishing stability and security at the lowest possible level of military forces. Nevertheless, given the complexities of the region's political landscape, an

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arms control agreement would be a difficult undertaking. However, the prospects for achieving it are now better than ever. In this context, recent initiatives by the United States, France and Canada seeking to reach a comprehensive arms control and disarmament regime in the Middle East are welcome since they will complement the broader efforts being made to promote peace and to defuse tensions in the region. Those initiatives represent a two-track approach in attempting to tackle issues on both the political and security fronts. It is our conviction that the essential principle for the viability of such initiatives is that any arms control and disarmament regime in the Middle East should be built on the principle of the sovereign equality of the States in the region and should lead to stability and security for all.

The elimination of chemical weapons from the arsenals of the world remains an urgent task for the international community. Turkey attaches the utmost importance to a speedy conclusion of a long-overdue comprehensive convention globally banning the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons under effective verification. With the 13 May initiative of President Bush, which revealed that a substantial revision of the positions of the United States had occurred, the negotiating process on the chemical weapons convention in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has entered a decisive phase, which should lead to the completion of negotiations by the middle of 1992. Turkey welcomes President Bush's important announcement that the United States is formally forswearing the use of chemical weapons for any reason, including retaliation, against any State, and that it unconditionally commits itself to the destruction of all its stocks within 10 years after the entry into force of the convention. This should facilitate the resolution of the remaining issues, notably the question of the

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verification regime and measures to achieve universality. In Turkey, we have intensified our preparations, both legislative and organizational, to ensure that we will be ready to sign a convention when it is finally concluded.

In the case of biological weapons, an international legal instrument banning them already exists. The Third Review Conference of the Parties to the biological and toxin weapons Convention of 1972 was held at Geneva from 9 to 27 September 1991. Turkey welcomes the successful outcome of the Review Conference, and in particular the significant progress made in the field of confidence-building measures and the important decision of the Conference to establish an ad hoc group of governmental experts to identify and examine potential verification measures from a scientific and technical standpoint. The Conference recognized that an effective verification regime was necessary to reinforce the Convention. We hope that the concrete steps decided by the Review Conference will eventually contribute to the strengthening of the authority of the Convention and encourage States that are not yet parties to the Convention to accede to it in the near future.

In his 1991 annual report on the work of the Organization, the United Nations Secretary-General expressed

> "grave concern over the problem of excessive and destabilizing transfers of conventional armaments". (A/46/1, p. 12)

Everyone agrees that States have a duty to ensure a reasonable level of security and that they have the inherent right of self-defence. But the Gulf conflict has demonstrated the dangers that the excessive build-up of arms, beyond the needs of self-defence, poses for both regional stability and world peace. There is a new awareness of the need to tackle the issue of overarmament. The introduction of an element of transparency into the area of

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international arms transfers would encourage States to act with moderation and restraint in their arms procurement and discourage tendencies to build up holdings of conventional weapons beyond a reasonable level.

In this context the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Study on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms", which was prepared with the assistance of qualified governmental experts, recommends the creation of a universal and non-discriminatory register of arms transfers under the auspices of the United Nations. We share the views expressed on this issue by Ambassador Peggy Mason of Canada in her statement in the First Committee on 18 October, in which she emphasized that a United Nations arms-transfers register

> "must include both suppliers and recipients. It must present an accurate picture of arms accumulation and it must be non-discriminatory to those who rely on arms imports to supply their defence needs. This is why Canada considers it essential that domestic arms procurement and arms holdings be reported to the register at an early stage." (A/C.1/46/PV.8, p. 15)

While fully supporting that approach to the issue, my delegation would like to go one step further and state that it is the view of my Government that the scope of the arms register should be widened to include the production of arms. Such a comprehensive approach would enhance transparency and increase the confidence-building potential of the register.

The issue of the United Nations register on arms transfers is only one area where this Committee is well placed to make a tangible contribution. We are confident that the First Committee will fully play its part in contributing to the objectives of arms control and disarmament and to the

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search for solutions to questions of cooperative security. We must seize the opportunity now presented to us by the existing positive climate of international relations and strive to achieve more fruitful work over the whole array of disarmament matters. My delegation stands ready to cooperate with you, Mr. Chairman, and with the members of the Committee in this common endeavour.

Mr. KUNDA (Zambia): Mr. Chairman, like others who have spoken before me I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of the First Committee. My congratulations also go to the other officers of the Committee for their unanimous elections to their respective posts. My delegation has been immensely impressed by the diligent manner in which the Committee's work has been conducted so far under your able leadership. I am convinced that the work of the Committee is already being steered towards a successful conclusion. My delegation pledges its full cooperation to you and the other officers.

I should also like to add my delegation's warm tribute to the memory of the late Ambassador Alfonso Garcia Robles of Mexico. His passing away on 2 September 1991 robbed the Committee - and, indeed, the whole disarmament world - of a great disarmament crusader. Ambassador Robles made a sterling contribution to the cause of disarmament over a long period of time. He will always be remembered with nostalgia as the undisputed "Dean of Disarmament" and "the father of the Treaty of Tlatelolco".

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We are meeting in this regular session of the General Assembly to discuss matters of disarmament in an international political milieu which is conducive to disarmament. A number of initiatives in the area of disarmament have contributed to this state of affairs. President George Bush's remarkable proposal for deep nuclear-arms cuts, announced on 27 September 1991, is a case in point. This elicited a reciprocal proposal from President Mikhail Gorbachev on 5 October 1991 for even deeper nuclear arms cuts. My delegation applauds these bold and courageous initiatives by the United States and the Soviet Union. There is, without a doubt, a realization on their part that security cannot be sought by stockpiling nuclear weapons. Lasting security can be sought only through disarmament.

The non-proliferation of nuclear weaponry is one of the best-known collateral disarmament measures that this Committee has addressed on a consistent basis. Non-proliferation has assumed more urgency now than at any other moment in a long time, since an unprecedented number of countries, including my own country, Zambia, have acceded to the non-proliferation Treaty all at once. In this regard, I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those delegations that have commended Zambia for its accession to the Treaty.

Since this is the first time that my delegation has addressed this body following our accession to the non-proliferation Treaty regime, this is an opportune moment for me to reiterate Zambia's principled position on the issue of non-proliferation of nuclear weaponry.

First, Zambia has, as a matter of principle, always been opposed to the development, production, stockpiling and possible use of nuclear weapons because they are not weapons of war but rather weapons of mass destruction.

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On the other hand, Zambia has always supported unreservedly all the best efforts aimed at the eventual realization of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Zambia believes that deciding finally to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is yet another way of reaffirming its commitment to that noble goal.

Secondly, Zambia has always been committed to the notion of the non-proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction because they constitute a potential threat to the survival of the human race and human civilization as we know it today.

Thirdly, Zambia has always regarded the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as an essential element of international security which benefits all States by reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation. The fact that all parties to the Treaty undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, and on nuclear disarmament as well as general and complete disarmament, makes the Treaty an essential, indeed central, element of both global and regional security. To be sure, it promises to foster a stable international security framework for the negotiated reduction and, ultimately, the elimination of nuclear weapons.

For a long time, Zambia's reason for not acceding to the non-proliferation Treaty was not that there was anything wrong with non-proliferation per se. We did not accede to the Treaty regime as matter of principle. From the beginning, we stated and restated over the years that there were certain discriminatory practices inherent in the Treaty regime which were put there by those who crafted the Treaty, notably the nuclear Powers. They sought to retain their monopolistic grip on nuclear-weapon power

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and denied the nuclear have-nots the freedom to acquire similar power. Furthermore, for a long time the nuclear Powers failed to abide by their responsibilities to negotiate in good faith for the realization of disarmament.

Although the shortcomings of the non-proliferation Treaty regime are still there, Zambia decided to accede to the Treaty this time around after a reasoned and objective assessment of all the relevant factors in today's international political atmosphere, which is unlike any before. These factors include the demise of the cold war and the subsequent relaxation of East-West ideological rivalry; the signing in Washington in 1987 of the Treaty on intermediate nuclear forces; and the agreement in principle by the Soviet Union and the United States to eliminate 50 per cent of their strategic nuclear forces. This has since culminated in the United States-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, signed in Moscow on 31 July 1991, under which the two leading nuclear Powers will reduce their strategic forces by 30 per cent. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was also signed in Paris, on 19 November 1990.

At home, in southern Africa, we have also witnessed positive political developments towards the beginning of the end of the system of apartheid.

These positive developments will come to naught if they fail to facilitate accelerated multilateral negotiations on the whole gamut of nuclear disarmament questions within the framework of the deliberative and negotiating bodies of the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament. Nuclear disarmament will remain illusory until the non-proliferation regime is given concrete form through the realization of a comprehensive test ban to replace the partial test-ban Treaty of 1963.

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By definition, a partial test ban treaty has a built-in window of vulnerability, which has turned out to be a prescription for the unabated continuation of the arms race. Thus, the partial test-ban Treaty has really not lived up to expectations, for it has dismally failed to curb horizontal and vertical as well as quantitative and qualitative proliferation of nuclear weapons over the past 28 years of its operation. That window of vulnerability inherent in the partial test-ban Treaty can be sealed only by a total ban on nuclear testing through the adoption of a comprehensive test-ban treaty to arrest for all time the menacing spectre of the arms race.

It is for this reason that Zambia has consistently over the years called for a comprehensive test-ban treaty and supported all conceivable efforts designed to attain a comprehensive test-ban regime. Regrettably, decades of such efforts have failed to bring a comprehensive test ban to fruition.

Because of this failure, Zambia, as a party to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, otherwise known as the partial test-ban Treaty, joined like-minded parties to the Treaty which felt strongly that recourse to the amendment procedure contained in the Treaty remained the only avenue available to the international community. Zambia pinned its highest hopes on the Amendment Conference of the Parties to the partial test-ban Treaty held in New York from 7 to 18 January 1991 because the amendment which was being sought was going to extend the proscription of nuclear-weapons testing to all environments, including under ground.

It was a matter of great disappointment that the Amendment Conference floundered because some nuclear Powers took issue with, inter alia, the aspect of verification of compliance and possible sanctions for non-compliance. We

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all know only too well that the question of verification, used as a pretext for opposing the amendment proposal, was resolved after a protracted discussion. In fact, it was the most discussed aspect of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Verification can hardly be a problem now, because it could be achieved through the development of an international system of seismic control, exchange of data on the radioactivity of air masses, systematic control by international inspectors and, possibly, obligatory on-site inspections.

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To be sure, the current technological capabilities are adequate and sufficiently effective in detecting any tests of military significance. One can hardly think of a more intrusive verification regime than the one envisaged to govern the comprehensive test-ban regime.

Zambia believes that the effectiveness of the non-proliferation Treaty will to a large extent depend on progress being achieved in the efforts towards converting the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty prohibiting nuclear-weapon tests for all time in all environments, including underground. In this regard, my delegation strongly recommends that the renewal of the non-proliferation Treaty in 1995 should be predicated on progress being attained in converting the present partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban Treaty.

While on the question of the comprehensive test-ban Treaty, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to commend the Soviet Union for its decision to mount a unilateral moratorium on nuclear-weapons testing announced by President Gorbachev recently. We can only hope that other nuclear-weapon States will take a cue from the Soviet Union's example by announcing similar decisions in this era of the relaxation of tension.

Zambia attaches great importance to yet another collateral disarmament measure, namely, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones wherever they may be. It is for this reason that my delegation attaches great importance to the denuclearization of Africa. All States members of the Organization of African Unity subscribe to the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa. This means that these States, Zambia included, have foresworn any possession of nuclear weapons. South Africa's possession of nuclear-weapon capability and

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of nuclear weapons is therefore a source of great concern to my delegation. It is the antithesis of the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa.

While appreciating the fact that South Africa has joined the non-proliferation Treaty regime and the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), my delegation wishes to emphasize the imperative need for the Director General of IAEA to ensure that South Africa does provide a complete inventory of its nuclear facilities and materials. The Agency must focus its fullest attention on the completeness of the initial inventory. It is only such revelation by South Africa of its inventory of all existing facilities and materials that can create a measure of confidence.

At long last, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace has at its 1991 sessions fulfilled its mandate by completing the preparatory work for the Colombo Conference. Thus, it is now possible to convene that conference in conjunction with the Government of Sri Lanka. In this regard, my delegation wishes to urge the three permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean which had in recent years suspended their participation in the preparatory work to come forward and declare their readiness to participate in the Colombo Conference in 1993 if a meaningful zone of peace in the Indian Ocean is to be attained.

Mr. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus): Permit me to take this opportunity to echo the sentiments of previous speakers in expressing sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. Let me hasten to add how pleased and honoured I feel to address this Committee under your chairmanship. We extend similar expressions of congratulation to the two Vice-Chairmen as well as to the Rapporteur. Knowing you and your reputation, my delegation is in no doubt that your diplomatic skills and experience augur

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well for both a meaningful session and a successful outcome of our deliberations. In carrying out your responsibilities you may rest assured of the support and cooperation of the delegation of Cyprus.

The international political landscape is changing at a pace that continues to amaze. The repercussions of a world order no longer handcuffed by the former East-West division have had positive results in the international arena. Whilst recognizing the positive elements that have emerged, one cannot but note with concern that certain negative elements which simmered beneath the surface in the former world political era are beginning to surface, threatening by virtue of the severity of their effects to detract from the achievements recorded thus far. In the light of the transient state of affairs at present, it is even more imperative to firmly cement the positive elements of the spirit of dialogue and cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, and to strengthen the emerging recognition of the United Nations and its Charter as the central axis in international affairs and of the need to implement United Nations resolutions without exception.

We are most heartened to note the increasing recognition that the peaceful settlement of disputes in conformity with the principles and purposes of the Charter must be the epicentre around which relations between States revolve. We note with satisfaction the increasing resolution of standing regional conflicts through the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. There can be no doubt that if this trend continues our ultimate goal of true international peace and security will no longer be an unattainable goal.

The Committee is meeting at a time when the question of disarmament has been receiving much attention. The former cold-war policy that security could

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only be maintained through the threat of nuclear destruction and the development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons is giving way to recognition that security can be maintained if we focus our energy and attention on dialogue and peace rather than on conflict and confrontation. The signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in July of this year, by which the United States and the Soviet Union declared their intention to reduce their nuclear arsenals by 30 per cent, is without doubt a most positive step in the right direction. Furthermore, we share the sentiments of previous speakers in welcoming the recent announcements by both President Bush and President Gorbachev that they will proceed with unilateral reductions of their tactical weapons. These bilateral agreements should not obscure the fact that, without detracting from their importance and positive nature, work still remains to be done in the field of strategic arms and nuclear weapons in general.

One unmistakable element that has been brought to the fore in the new climate of international politics is that security can no longer be seen through the narrow confines of military considerations. For too long we have blinkered ourselves from the reality that security is not enhanced by higher levels of armaments. On the contrary, the spiralling movement has a destabilizing rather than a stabilizing effect. Security can be achieved by lowering the levels of armaments, which in turn releases much-needed funds for economic and social development. Mere reflection on past experience should dictate our future actions. Arming oneself to the hilt at the expense of political, economic, social and environmental security will eventually prove to be no security at all.

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Recognizing this at this session and laying out our collective strategy for the future within a revitalized United Nations must rank among our top priorities. We cannot afford to sink into the armchair of self-satisfaction solely on the basis of the recent changes that have occurred. These changes have yet to usher in a permanent system of security. It is up to us - individually and collectively - to grasp the moment and utilize to the full the opportunities afforded us for a safer world.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons must remain our ultimate goal. Old doctrines that harboured the nuclear-arms race are being swept aside. So, too, in turn must any remnants of a past era of security through fear of annihilation. Nuclear disarmament should be addressed through a comprehensive test-ban treaty. The dangers of nuclear proliferation are as acute today as ever. Events during and in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis attest to those dangers. One cannot but stress the interlinkage between a comprehensive test-ban treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), particularly with the year 1995 fast approaching.

The international community today is expending much energy on the very real dangers posed by other weapons of mass destruction. The Gulf crisis sharpened our focus once again on the imperative need to prohibit the acquisition, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and to conclude a chemical weapons convention as soon as possible. My delegation hopes that, with the forward movement evidenced in the negotiations on this issue within the Conference on Disarmament, a comprehensive convention will be concluded sooner rather than later.

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The dangers posed by biological weapons also demand our continued and fullest attention. We note the findings of the recent Third Review Conference on the Biological Weapons Convention and urge everyone to work in a positive and constructive manner to bolster the Convention.

Events in the Gulf brought to the fore an issue whose dangerous consequences the international community has witnessed on previous occasions: the unbridled transfer of arms to countries or regions and the subsequent use of those arms to impose a solution to a dispute through the use of force. In the aftermath of the dismantling of the cold-war, East-West divide, my delegation is particularly concerned that the arms merchants of the world will seek new areas to proliferate the surplus weapons or experts in arms production, further destabilizing existing regional conflicts and sowing the seeds for future ones. It is of the essence, therefore, that arms transfers be monitored. There are no bargains to be gained - rather, further political, economic and social destabilization, particularly of the developing countries. Peace and security will not be achieved through armaments but by strict adherence to the Charter and through a commitment to collective security and collective action that will act as an effective deterrent against those bent on using force to settle their disputes.

The levels of conventional weapons are also in need of constant attention. The sophistication of conventional weapons today and the ease with which they can be purchased do not allow us to relax our efforts towards conventional disarmament. The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) signed by the States of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) last year is a major step within Europe towards reducing the levels of conventional weapons on that continent. A mere glance at the level of

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armaments in other regions of the world is proof enough that reduction of conventional weapons must spread to other regions of the world. In this regard, confidence- and security-building measures in order to foster a sustainable disarmament process take on an added dimension. The 1990 Vienna document on confidence- and security-building measures, endorsed by the CSCE countries, and endorsed in the Charter of Paris is of great importance to our efforts.

Today, as never before, there is a need to put into practice what is preached in this Committee year after year. There is an emerging climate in world affairs that demands action and not merely words. The dangers of the past are very fresh in our minds and still very much in existence. We are by no means out of the woods yet, though for the first time in nearly half a century we can see the path of permanent peace and security that has eluded us until now. The First Committee at this session can light the beacon to guide the international community on the proper path. Let us not lose this opportunity.

Mr. PRADHAN (Nepal): I wish to join other delegations in expressing our heartfelt condolences to the delegation of Mexico on the death of Ambassador Garcia Robles, a ceaseless crusader for disarmament.

My delegation had the honour and privilege of nominating you, Sir, as Chairman of the First Committee at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and has already extended our warm felicitations to you and the other officers of the Committee. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the admirable manner in which you have been guiding the deliberations of the Committee.

(Mr. Pradhan, Nepal)

Nepal, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, has always had a firm belief in the principles of universal peace, brotherhood and cooperation; and to us the United Nations stands for the same ideals. We have always believed that international relations should be conducted on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence - mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. We therefore warmly applaud the end of the cold war and the growing understanding and cooperation between the major Powers. The radically altered international relations have given a fillip to the people's aspirations for freedom, democracy and full enjoyment of their inalienable rights as enunciated in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The changed climate has also ushered in an era of new thinking on matters of security, arms control and disarmament.

Nepal joins in welcoming the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the Soviet Union and the United States. It constitutes a major step towards the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the two super-Powers. We are heartened by the determination of the signatories to seek an early ratification of the Treaty. We also welcome the initiative taken by the President of the United States for a unilateral cutback on shorter-range nuclear weapons and for the general relaxation of nuclear tension. These bold moves have met with an equally positive response from President Gorbachev. These developments raise hopes for the attainment of the universally cherished goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The very existence of nuclear weapons, and their dubious value as deterrents notwithstanding, is a threat to the survival of life on the planet.

(Mr. Pradhan, Nepal)

Nepal is a State party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and views it as the cornerstone of efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. We support the call for strict adherence by all States to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The declarations of intent to accede to the NPT by China and France and the accessions of Lithuania, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe will have an important bearing on the extension of this vital international disarmament instrument beyond 1995.*

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* Mr. Alpman, Turkey, Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

(Mr. Pradhan, Nepal)

My delegation is convinced that the comprehensive test-ban treaty will have a decisive impact on strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It was on the basis of this principle that Nepal participated in the Amendment Conference of the States parties to the partial test-ban Treaty in January this year. We have noted the re-establishment, during the 1991 session of the Conference on Disarmament, of the Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear testing. We hope that in 1992 the Ad Hoc Committee will be given a clear mandate to negotiate a comprehensive test-ban treaty. In the same spirit, we welcome the proposal of President Gorbachev for a one-year moratorium on nuclear testing.

My delegation welcomes the optimistic view expressed by the President of the Conference on Disarmament of the on-going negotiations on chemical weapons. We sincerely hope that 1992 will witness the conclusion of this long-awaited non-discriminatory global convention. We have noted with satisfaction the outcome of the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the biological weapons Convention, held recently in Geneva; it signals the heightened awareness among the members of the international community that urgent measures must be taken to meet unforeseen challenges in the area of these inhumane weapons.

In recent years, conventional disarmament and measures at the regional level have been receiving the attention they deserve at the United Nations. We are confident that the signing of the agreement on conventional forces in Europe and the strengthening of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) process will have a salutary impact on similar processes in other regions of the world.

(Mr. Pradhan, Nepal)

The success of the CSCE process is a strong reminder that confidence- and security-building measures, though in themselves not measures for arms control, do have an important role in creating conditions favourable to arms control and disarmament. It is a fact that each region has its own peculiar security perceptions and considerations. The details of the CSCE process cannot be transplanted to other regions of the world. This truism, however, should not detract from other regions' emulating the example of Europe.

In this context, I wish to refer to the preliminary but none the less very important work being done by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, located in Kathmandu, Nepal. The extremely fruitful discussions, in an unofficial setting, held under the auspices of the Regional Centre in Kathmandu in January this year are examples. There have been important steps towards generating interest in confidence-building measures and confidence- and security-building measures and in exploring freely the various options applicable to the Asia and Pacific region. A very good beginning has been made in an extremely sensitive region, and my delegation hopes that the exercise will continue. It is in our common interest to encourage the regional centres and to support them with voluntary contributions so as to enable them to fulfil their mandates.

The promotion of transparency in military matters will go a long way towards creating conditions conducive to curbing the arms race, which is fuelled, to a large measure, by lack of mutual trust and confidence. While supporting all efforts for regional disarmament, my delegation wishes to emphasize that the weapons rendered surplus by agreement in a certain region should not be transferred to other regions of the world.

(Mr. Pradhan, Nepal)

We welcome the report of the group of experts on ways and means of promoting transparancy in international transfers of conventional weapons. We fully agree with the observation of the Secretary-General that there is an emerging consensus among nations that international security and stability will be well-served by an increased openness and transparency in military fields, including the areas of arms transfers.

With this in mind, my delegation welcomes the proposal for the establishment, at the United Nations, of an arms-transfer register. We fully understand the argument that such a system must be universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory. We hope that, given the importance of the matter, the Committee will be able during the current session of the General Assembly to reach a consensus on the ways and means of implementing the proposal.

I have not even touched on many important items on the agenda of the Committee. I cannot, however, end my statement without reiterating my delegation's conviction that the United Nations has a central role to play in arms control and disarmament. We fully agree with the statement made before the Committee by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, to the effect that fundamental changes in international relations offer this Organisation a unique opportunity.

We have seen the welcome results of the decision to rationalize the work of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission has laid the groundwork for substantive work in three new items on the agenda during its 1991 session. Given the will for dialogue, accommodation and cooperation, the Commission can achieve concrete results.

The right to self-defence is sacrosanct and recognized by the Charter. In the final analysis, however, the present obsession with military security

(Mr. Pradhan, Nepal)

is fundamentally inconsistent with the avowed pursuit of a new international order. This Organization offers the only universal democratic forum for all countries, large and small, strong and weak, to work together to reverse and halt the persistent threat posed by the proliferation of weapons and technologies of mass destruction.

I wish to place on record the deep appreciation of my delegation to Under-Secretary-General Akashi for the bold and imaginative leadership he has been providing to the Department of Disarmament Affairs. A renewal of faith in multilateralism will diversify demands on the Department and increase its workload. The Under-Secretary-General and his small team of dedicated officials need all the support the Committee can give to allow them to respond effectively to the growing agenda needs.

Finally, I wish to express the appreciation of my delegation for the very generous remarks made by the Chairman and by other representatives regarding the chairmanship of this Committee at the last session. Needless to say, the extent of support from the members is the measure of the success of the chairman of a committee. I have the pleasant duty of expressing the deep gratitude of Ambassador Jai Pratap Rana for the unfailing and unqualified support, guidance and cooperation he received from every delegation to this Committee and from the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs. It was, indeed, an honour for Nepal to have its representative elected Chairman of this important Committee at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. AWAD (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): My delegation would like to join the speakers who have extended to you their congratulations on your chairmanship of this important Committee. We take

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

this opportunity to express our appreciation for the role played by your predecessor, Ambassador Rana, in guiding the work of the Committee. Allow me also to congratulate the other officers of the Committee and to pay tribute to the Secretariat for the manner in which they have been carrying out their work in this Committee.

It is gratifying to note that the deliberations on disarmament issues have been taking place, over the past couple of years, in an improved international climate, inasmuch as the world has left behind the times of tension, confrontation and cold war to enter upon a new era of dialogue of détente and cooperation. The hateful age of division has ended and a new age of democracy and human rights has dawned.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

Over the past two years, we have witnessed important initiatives in the area of nuclear disarmament. Vigorous strides are being made on a long road that the peoples of the world hope will not lead to a dead-end. The grave danger lies in the very existence of weapons of mass destruction not merely in their numbers. However small the arsenals of such overkill weapons may be, they are a horrible nightmare for mankind.

My delegation hopes that the end of the cold war will lead to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations with respect to the adoption of concrete steps to ensure respect for the provisions of the Charter which guarantee the sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic independence of States, the non-use or threat of use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the right of all peoples to self-determination, and the elimination of racial discrimination and foreign occupation. This should also encompass disarmament with respect to weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear and chemical weapons.

I shall not address all the items before the First Committee, but shall limit myself to the register of international transfers of conventional arms proposed in the draft resolution submitted by the European Community countries and Japan. I would note that the communiqué issued by the five permanent members of the Security Council following their July meeting in Paris is worth perusing in this regard; it provides a starting-point for the idea of such a register. In the first paragraph of that communiqué, the Five stated that the problem was the proliferation and stockpiling of large quantities of arms which upsets the balance of power and increases the possibility of war. They expressed the intention not to engage in transfers of conventional weapons when such transfers could undermine stability.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

The Five further noted that the deployment and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of missiles pose a threat to peace and stability and committed themselves to taking effective steps to end the proliferation of such weapons and to control them: regional and global steps that would be honest, reasonable, comprehensive and balanced.

The five permanent members of the Security Council viewed the problem in a way similar to that in which they saw the disarmament process in the Middle East: as a problem of the stockpiling of conventional and non-conventional weapons. But such stockpiling is often a consequence, not the cause, of the problem. Very often, regional conflicts are the reason why parties acquire weapons for the sake of legitimate self-defence in the face of expansionist policies of the other party such as Israel, as is the case in the Middle East.

We in the Middle East have had to live alongside Israel, which has been assisted to acquire arsenals that are excessive both qualitatively and quantitatively, including nuclear weapons. That has enabled Israel to pursue its expansionist policies and forced the victims of Israeli aggression, in the absence of peaceful solutions, to acquire available weapons in order to regain their usurped rights.

In its second paragraph, the Paris communiqué states that the participants considered arms control initiatives put forward by a number of Heads of State or Government and other initiatives which address arms control globally and as a matter of urgency, in the Middle East. The participants agreed to support continued work in the United Nations on an arms-transfers register to be established under the aegis of the Secretary-General, on a non-discriminatory basis, as a step towards increased transparency on arms transfers.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

They stressed that the ultimate response to the threat of proliferation is verifiable arms-control and disarmament agreements amongst the parties concerned.

They also strongly supported the objective of establishing a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East through the full implemenation of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and adoption by countries in the region of a comprehensive programme of arms control for the region, including: a freeze and the ultimate elimination of ground-to-ground missiles in the region; submission by all nations in the region of all of their nuclear activities to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); a ban on the importation and production of nuclear-weapons useable materials; and agreements by all States in the region to undertake to become parties to the chemical-weapons convention as soon as it is concluded in 1992.

The proposed arms transfers register under the aegis of the Secretary-General, as a step towards greater transparency in this sphere, appears to be worthy of support. But with respect to our region, I would note that Israel will always be in a better position than any Arab State to obscure transparency: Israel manufactures weapons of all kinds, including nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

Furthermore, the arms reduction programme proposed to the States of the region is not a balanced one. Indeed, it contains no provision that would rid the region of Israel's nuclear stockpiles. It leaves the Israeli arsenal alone and does not even contain an undertaking with regard to the non-use or threat to use nuclear weapons. Such a situation leaves Israel with a potent weapon it can use to retain all the expansionist territorial gains it has made through aggression and which would tempt her to make further gains in the future.

In complete contrast to this leniency in addressing the question of Israel's nuclear arsenal, the proposed programme deals very strictly indeed with ground-to-ground missiles and their final elimination. As regards chemical weapons, the programme stipulates accession to the convention on such weapons as soon as it is concluded in 1992 and we know that that convention would provide for the total and final elimination of such weapons.

The implementation of this convention by all States in the region would entail the perpetuation of the serious regional imbalance which results from the fact that Israel would keep its stockpiles whereas no Arab State possesses such weapons.

It should also be noted that the programme has not dealt with air-to-ground missiles while it is known that warplanes and air-to-ground missiles are no less dangerous than ground-to-ground missiles. Indeed, they are much more lethal. It is known to all that Israel enjoys overwhelming superiority in such weapons over every other State in the region.

We also note that the programme prohibits transfer of technology in the areas of nuclear and chemical weapons and the manufacture of missiles.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

Given the fact that Israel is the only country in the region that possesses this technology of which the Arab States are deprived, the ban on the import of technology would have no impact on Israel's capacity to use that technology for military purposes.

We believe, therefore, that in order to guarantee the effectiveness of any weapons control programmes in the region the question of weapons of mass destruction of all kinds must be addressed with one single standard and in conformity with the priorities laid down in paragraph 45 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Thus, the idea of the proposed register turns out to be one more injustice as far as countries that do not manufacture the weapons are concerned. This holds true for most third world countries, in particular the Arab countries because of the special circumstances prevailing in the Middle East.

We do hope that the peace conference that has just opened in Madrid will succeed in putting an end to this injustice and bring about a global, just and lasting peace in the region.

Ms. PEÑA (Nicaragua) (interpretation from Spanish): First, let me say how delighted my delegation is that Ambassador Robert Mroziewicz of Poland is Chairman of our Committee. We take pleasure in knowing that this session is being chaired by the representative of a country, Poland, with which Nicaragua enjoys excellent ties of friendship. We are sure that under his leadership the work of the First Committee will be crowned with success. I extend my congratulations also to all the officers of the Committee and to the secretariat.

(Ms. Peña, Nicaragua)

The international community has exerted major efforts in the field of disarmament in recent years. In this context my delegation wishes to pay a special tribute to the memory of Alfonso Garcia Robles, an illustrious Mexican and Latin American, a true architect of peace, one who, through his inspired participation in the working out of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, among other contributions, left us with an indelible memory and lasting appreciation of his work.

This year we are viewing with particular optimism and satisfaction the successful culmination of concerted efforts in our region, including the Mendoza Agreement on the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, which was signed on 5 September last between Argentina, Brazil and Chile and to which Uruguay has also acceded. We also underscore the importance of progress in bilateral negotiations between Argentina and Brazil on cooperative measures and confidence-building as tangible steps of fundamental significance on the way towards peace.

The creation of a zone of peace in the Atlantic, proposed by Brazil, and the creation of a zone of peace in the Pacific, proposed by Peru, as well as the recent proposal submitted by Ecuador to the General Assembly for a South American zone of peace are all real signs of the current level of understanding and agreement of views prevailing in our part of the world. In our own subregion Nicaragua has taken an initiative also, with the backing of the other Central American countries and Panama, to declare Central America, at this session, a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

The dialogue and the openness predominating in the international community have contributed to bringing about major agreements on nuclear

(Ms. Peña, Nicaragua)

disarmament, taking the place of the policy pursued hitherto of nuclear deterrence and substituting for it a new strategy based instead on common security. An example of such progress is found in the negotiations initiated by President George Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev on the reduction and elimination of shorter-range missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles, together with a moratorium on nuclear testing.

(Ms. Peña, Nicaragua)

We welcome the declaration by France, China, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe of their accession to the non-proliferation Treaty, and we agree with the delegations which have said in this Committee that the validity of that instrument will have to be prolonged if we are to ensure success at the conference of 1995. Preparations for that conference should begin as soon as possible. We also feel that the conclusion of the negotiations on a chemical-weapons convention, expected in 1992, will lead to a universal and non-discriminatory accord capable of achieving the total elimination of those weapons.

In recent days many delegations have voiced the desire to see the work of the First Committee streamlined further. My delegation supports the efforts that are being made to achieve that end with the greatest possible degree of consensus.

On the question of arms trafficking, we agree with the recommendation of the Group of Governmental Experts that a universal and non-discriminatory register under United Nations auspices should be established. We are of the view that that would be the most appropriate first step towards the adoption and implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of military affairs. However, we share the view of various non-aligned and developed countries that the register should be expanded. Issues involving the production and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction and their components, as well as the transfer of technology in that field, will have to be examined carefully with a view to strengthening confidence.

In today's world, concern about development and about common interests has replaced ideological controversy. In this context, the major global challenges identifiable at the conclusion of the cold war could be dealt with

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in such a way that solutions to the various individual problems would make it possible to consolidate a new era of peace and security - an era marked by a significant reduction in military expenditure and by the channelling towards development projects of the resources thus released.

As we stated during the debate in the General Assembly, Nicaragua believes that a reduction of 50 per cent in military expenditure by the end of this decade and the allocation of the funds thus saved to international cooperation in the field of human and social development could be a viable aspiration. General and complete disarmament can open the door to development as the best peace dividend. The developing countries spend almost $200 billion per annum on arms, a figure which in 1988 represented 4.3 per cent of their gross domestic product. If that expenditure were slashed, the money saved could be reinvested in social progress for the peoples of those countries.

We are convinced that nations can prosper only if they have healthy, literate and well-trained populations. In her address to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 3 October 1991, the President of Nicaragua, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, aware of the importance of education, disarmament and development, declared that the number of school-books distributed during the one and a half years of her administration was greater than the total number of rifles used during the entire period of the civil war in Nicaragua.

In the present international situation security is no longer a purely military issue; it is a matter of food and of social, economic and ecological needs. Security also implies the right to a democratic society, to development and to the full enjoyment of human rights.

(Ms. Peña, Nicaragua)

We must abandon the double standard under which we condemn the deaths of human beings in military conflicts but remain indifferent to the deaths of millions of people killed by poverty and malnutrition.

The experience of Nicaragua confirms that the process of bringing democracy to a country does not end but only begins with the holding of elections, that democracy can come about only through the strengthening of a country's institutions, a firm commitment to democratic values, respect for fundamental rights and readiness to resolve domestic disputes without resort to violence or war. Nascent democracies that have no tradition or culture of democratic values must be strengthened.

Aware of its commitments and of the socio-political and economic realities that it faces, the new Government of Nicaragua, in less than a year, has managed to bring peace to the country, to decrease the military budget substantially and to reduce the number of permanent military personnel from 90,000 to 28,000. It is our intention to reduce that figure further to about 20,000, by the end of the year, making the Nicaraguan armed forces the smallest in Central America. This achievement in just 18 months gives our people cause for pride, tired as we are of violence and war.

At the Puntarenas Summit Conference held in Costa Rica on 15, 16 and 17 December 1990, the Presidents of the Central American countries took a historic decision when they proclaimed Central America a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. That step amounted essentially to the proclamation of a new integral and comprehensive model of regional security in the political, economic, ecological, social and military spheres.

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As that ambition is gradually translated into action and reality, our countries are pursuing the establishment of an overall framework and a climate that will facilitate the kind of transformation to which we are committed and will further intra-regional cooperation, while showing Central America to the world as an area that is coming to grips with reality and seeks to free itself from the spectre of war, dictatorship and poverty - that is, from violence in all its manifestations - and to replace them with ever more advanced manifestations of political, economic and social democracy.

At Puntarenas the Central American Presidents recognized that regional peace is one and indivisible and that violence, wherever it may break out, has a negative impact throughout the region.

In July 1990, just a few months before the meeting at Puntarenas, the meetings of the Security Commission of the Esquipulas accords were reactivated. That machinery is presided over by civilian authorities - the Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs - but it also involves representatives of the armed forces and the security agencies of the countries concerned.

From the very first meeting, held at San José on 31 July 1990, the basic goals of negotiations were spelt out: achieving a reasonable balance or a proportional and across-the-board equilibrium in terms of arms, equipment and troop strengths and defining a new pattern of security relations between the States of Central America, based upon cooperation, coordination, prevention and communication.

(Ms. Peña, Nicaragua)

At its second meeting, held in San Salvador on 12 and 13 September 1990, a set of measures was established aimed at building confidence between the States concerned, including mechanisms for ongoing and flexible coordination and communication to prevent accidents and avoid tensions.

At the Security Commission's third meeting, held in Tegucigalpa on 23 and 24 November 1990, a format was adopted for an arms inventory and a census of troop strengths, and a time limit established for submitting the inventories, which have already been delivered by three countries in the area. Agreement was also reached on the issues of disarming civilians and removing mines. The Organization of American States is supporting these issues.

The fourth meeting of the Security Commission was held in two stages, the first in Managua on 12 and 13 April 1991, and the second in Guatemala on 19 and 20 September. An exchange of views took place on the proposal for a security treaty submitted by Honduras. It was decided to initiate an internal process of consultations on the matter.

The forthcoming meeting of the Security Commission will be held in San José, Costa Rica, from 7 to 9 November. To be studied are a system of ceilings on limiting armaments and troop strengths, and a proposal, already discussed at the technical level, for verification machinery for these agreements.

In the absence of a comprehensive international commitment to resolving the problems facing developing countries, the role and principles of the United Nations Charter will continue to be of vital significance in promoting disarmament, development and prosperity. The problems of underdevelopment and poverty are among the chief causes of conflict threatening international peace and security. Without peace it is impossible to struggle for development, and

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without development it is impossible to imagine a true and honourable peace that would apply to all.

Nicaragua, whose experience is an accurate reflection of global changes towards democracy and national reconciliation, has enjoyed the effective support of the United Nations in the arduous task of building a comprehensive peace.

In Nicaragua, on 24 October, on the occasion of the celebration of United Nations Day, a military base in the municipality of Pantasma, in the department of Jinotega, was officially turned over to the United Nations. That base will be transformed into a centre for technological development, training, and agriculture and husbandry diversification. This is a symbol of the new Nicaragua, one committed to disarmament and to developing the fullest potential of all our countries.

Most particularly, Nicaragua believes to be of vital importance the role the United Nations can continue to play in strengthening verification machinery in border areas, so as to enhance the efficiency of the work being done with a view to forestalling illegal arms trafficking in our region, wherever it may originate. We therefore consider invaluable the job done by the United Nations Observer Group in Central America in terms of on-site verification.

As we have pointed out in this forum on earlier occasions, we know that there remain many obstacles in the way of rapid progress towards establishing effective arms control and troop-strength limitation, as the five Central American Presidents have instructed.

In conclusion, I should like to quote from the text of the Guadalajara Declaration, signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American

(Ms. Peña, Nicaragua)

countries at a meeting held in that Mexican city on 18 and 19 July. It succinctly sums up our position on the issue before us.

"We desire a future that holds certainty, peace and security for our peoples. That will be possible only if international law is respected and there is general and complete disarmament which discourages the use of force and favours a negotiated settlement of disputes." (A/46/317, annex, para. 6)

Mr. RIVERO del ROSARIO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Today, the delegation of Cuba would like to refer in particular to one of the issues on the long list of disarmament agenda items with which we have dealt little to date. I am thinking particularly of the question of naval disarmament.

My delegation fully endorses points already made by other delegations at this and other international forums to the effect that naval disarmament and related issues, given their importance, must be the subject of broader study and consideration. Concerning this set of issues, we must take specific steps that could contribute to strengthening security and peace on the national, regional and international levels. In the realm of nuclear weapons as well as conventional arms, the basic manner in which measures are arranged and agreed in negotiations tends to exclude this important area. All States have a keen interest in matters of naval disarmament and, without doubt, this applies even more to those fronting on oceans and seas.

As international events have shown, the key concern is based, not in the steps taken by States to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity or in the weapons they are forced to acquire towards that end - steps which are unquestionable rights covered under international norms and the United Nations Charter - but rather in the use or threat of use of force in acts of

(Mr. Rivero del Rosario, Cuba)

intimidation or aggression against sovereign States via naval activity carried out by certain States; military manoeuvres on a large scale or near the coasts of other countries; or simulated attacks, including the disembarkation of forces and the seizing of territory in which their vast navies and entire arsenal of marine infantry are used.

Although the strict and scrupulous application of, and respect for, the principles of international law are the best contribution that can be made to furthering efforts for international peace and security, without any question a significant contribution towards that end would also be the adoption of concrete measures in the realm of naval disarmament, which could be accompanied by confidence-building measures.

(Mr. Rivero del Rosario, Cuba)

In this connection, particular responsibility is incurred by nuclear Powers and all States that possess major military arsenals deployed in the form of fleets and other naval installations and matériel.

Here, my delegation would like to refer to the issue of naval bases on foreign territory, especially those that are installed against the will and desire of the States on whose territory they are located.

It would be nugatory to reiterate here the past history of the establishment of such naval bases in third world countries, a practice that harks back to a time when our countries were territories dependent on the major colonialist countries and when their colonial status made it possible for such naval installations and bases important in the struggle between the colonialist centres and empires then quarrelling over the division of the world.

In the case of Cuba, that was the fate to which we were subjected, together with Puerto Rico and the Philippines, at the end of last century when the Paris agreements were entered into whereby the United States wrested from Spain its former overseas territories, at the same time subjugating the indigenous independence-loving and freedom-loving forces which, in the case of the Cuban Mambises, had been involved in a decades-long struggle in which they had nearly achieved success in their fight for their much-yearned-for freedom.

Since the triumph of the Cuban revolution over 30 years ago the Government and people of Cuba have repeatedly called for the return of the territory occupied by the United States at the Guantanamo Naval Base. That base was imposed on Cuba by means of an amendment to its Constitution dictated by the United States Government during its military occupation of the island at the beginning of the century. As the historical documents and orders

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issued by the United States authorities at the time prove, it had to be accepted as it stood, with all its humiliating limitations upon Cuba's national sovereignty, or the occupying Yankee armed forces would not have been withdrawn from Cuba.

We do not intend at this juncture to go into the entire long litany of illegal and arbitrary acts that began with the imposition of the Platt Amendment under which, since the beginning of the century, the unwanted United States military presence has been established and perpetuated on Cuban territory, territory that we will never give up.

One of the aspects indicative of the arbitrary and trumped-up nature of the purportedly legal basis on which that naval enclave is maintained in Cuba is the one involving the alleged purposes for which the United States was to use that portion of Cuban territory, which, as article VII of the Platt Amendment notes, was for the purpose of maintaining Cuban independence and protecting its people, whereas the so-called Treaty of Reciprocity - which was imposed on us in 1934 and which was supposed to correct the odious constitutional amendment of 1901 by providing for a so-called leasing of Cuban territory - stated that it was guided by the desire to strengthen the ties of friendship between the two countries - as if the covert looting of our country could ever have been anything but the vilest act of pillage and plunder.

The historical use to which that particular military base has been put is only too well known. It was not only a support base for the assault on the popular forces fighting against the tyranny that had existed in Cuba until 1 January 1959 and for the massacre of civilians by bombing raids in the mountains; it has also served to infiltrate agents and saboteurs and to support, aid and abet groups and bands of counter-revolutionaries in Cuba,

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just as it has been used to support United States aggression against neighbouring countries.

In addition, a number of experts, as well as various United States Government spokesmen, have for years recognized that the Guantanamo Naval Base has no strategic use whatever and that it is maintained for purely political reasons. This is all the more obvious in the light of the recent changes in the international situation.

In what amounts to a flagrant contradiction, at the same time that the United States Government is for financial reasons shutting down many military bases on its own territory it is continuing to spend tens of millions of dollars per annum on maintaining the Guantanamo Naval Base, one that, given its proximity to the United States and its patent lack of any legitimate military purpose - not to mention its rejection by the people and Government of Cuba - should be shut down and dismantled immediately. The resources now being used to persist in this high-handed behaviour might better be turned to dealing with health, education and employment, indeed with any and all of the social needs that are so pressing in many different sectors of the United States population.

The Guantanamo Naval Base, as was spelled out in July 1962 by the Cuban leader Fidel Castro, "is a dagger plunged into the heart of Cuba's land", and he added: "It is a base that we will not remove by force but a piece of land we will never relinquish."

There is talk of a so-called new era, a new order, the end of the cold war, of renewed thinking in international relations, but I ask: Are those things consistent with the harassment, the hostility we see, with the implacable efforts being made to strangle our economy through the inhuman and

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criminal blockade that has been imposed upon us for 30 years now, with the savage pressure brought to bear on governments and international bodies to isolate our country, or with the ceaseless campaigns of slander which, along with other aggressive measures, are being waged against Cuba by the United States Government? I ask: Are those new elements compatible with the illegal occupation of Cuban territory, where the United States maintains, against the express will of our people, a military base that is totally obsolete for that country's strategic defence? What, I ask, is that base meant for, other than to humiliate and threaten Cuba?

Recently, in the heat of the announcement by the Government of the Soviet Union of its readiness to withdraw the Soviet military presence, which consists of one brigade that has been stationed in Cuba at reduced strength as a result of the agreements reached following the October 1962 crisis, the Government of Cuba declared its readiness to accept the withdrawal of Soviet military personnel from its territory if it were accompanied by a simultaneous withdrawal of the United States military personnel.

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As was stated by the Cuban Government on 14 September 1991, on the occasion of the announcement by the Government of the USSR:

"If the harmonization process between the Soviet Union and the United States has reached a point at which questions such as this can be resolved without suspicions or fears, after the declaration by the USSR, the only appropriate course is to negotiate the withdrawal of the Soviet brigade, which we have welcomed with fraternal hospitality and gratitude, together with the removal of the naval base at Guantanamo, as we propose.

To that end, Cuba is prepared to be a party to an international agreement with United Nations guarantees. Such an agreement could include fully guaranteed, mutually satisfactory confidence-building measures, among them, of course, the cessation of exercises for the invasion of Cuba, which the Yankee command has been systematically carrying out in the region for some years. Then we could really speak, in the case of Cuba, of the reign of new political thinking in international relations."

And further on in the statement there is something that, though obvious, should not be passed over in silence: "Cuba does not threaten any country or any Government on the planet."

Here, then, we have a concrete way of proving by deeds the advent of a new way of thinking and a new order serving the peace and security of all nations, large and small, rich and poor. The simultaneous withdrawal from Cuban territory of the Soviet military unit and of the United States naval base at Guantanamo would constitute tangible proof of that.

Ms. JUNOD (International Committee of the Red Cross): The raison d'être of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is to

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alleviate the suffering caused by war. The most visible way of achieving that end is the practical assistance and protection provided by its delegates to the victims of conflicts.

Less visible but equally important is the role of the ICRC in the implementation of international humanitarian law and in the encouragement of its development. That law not only establishes rules for the protection of victims but also limits means and methods of warfare used by parties to a conflict.

The ICRC is principally concerned with two major rules of customary law when considering weapons development: the prohibition of the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering and the prohibition of the use of indiscriminate weapons. The use of weapons is regulated by international humanitarian law in order to minimize civilian casualties and to prevent the infliction of unnecessarily cruel suffering upon soldiers. Those rules are now codified in Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions (article 51, para. 4, article 35, para. 2, and article 36).

Restraints on the waging of war are to be found in customs that date from centuries ago, but the systematic codification of this area of law began with the ICRC-sponsored Geneva Convention of 1864, which provided protection for wounded soldiers. Subsequently, a number of initiatives led to the adoption of further treaties.

The first treaty which specifically outlawed the use of particular weapons was the Saint Petersburg Declaration of 1868. It is interesting to note that the State that had invented the weapon - a bullet that exploded in the human body - was the State that sought to prohibit its use once it realized the very cruel effects such bullets would have on soldiers.

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That Declaration enunciated a fundamental principle of international humanitarian law, namely, that "the only legitimate object which States should endeavour to accomplish during war is to weaken the military forces of the enemy" and that "this object would be exceeded by the employment of arms which uselessly aggravate the sufferings of disabled men, or render their death inevitable".

In February 1918 the ICRC published an appeal that strongly protested the use of poison gas, referring in particular to the terrible suffering it inflicted on soldiers and also to the horrendous effects it could have on the civilian population. It therefore urged the Governments of the time to conclude an agreement prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. That led to the adoption of the Geneva Gas Protocol of 1925.

The ICRC sincerely hopes that that prohibition now has a real chance of effective implementation. In this respect, recent commitments to the unconditional destruction of all stockpiles of such weapons and the abandonment of the idea of retaliation are major steps forward.

As early as 1918, the appeal of the ICRC expressed anxiety about the humanitarian implications of the capabilities of new technology:

> "Far from alleviating the evils which war brings in its train, it may be said that scientific progress in aeronautics, ballistics and chemistry has merely aggravated the suffering and, above all, extended it to the whole population, so that war from now on will be nothing but a ruthless work of destruction."

In 1920 the ICRC began to try to persuade States to adopt treaties that would limit means and methods of warfare, with the objective of protecting the civilian population from attacks and of outlawing weapons that were

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indiscriminate or caused excessive suffering. It was only in the 1970s that States were finally ready to adopt, in treaty form, that necessary protection.

The ICRC, in cooperation with experts from various Governments, prepared texts which were the basis of discussions at the diplomatic conference that led to the adoption of the two 1977 Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions. Apart from providing further protection for victims of war, the main achievement of those Protocols was the regulation of methods and means of warfare, which is meaningful for the modern conditions of both international and internal armed conflicts.

Parallel with the discussions that led to the adoption of those Protocols, the ICRC held a Conference of Government Experts to study more carefully the possibility of the specific legal regulation of certain weapons that could be considered excessively injurious or that had indiscriminate effects. The Conference considered a wide variety of weapons but realized that in relation to many of them it did not yet have enough information to decide what possible type of legal regulation would be suitable. That was particularly true in the case of what it called "future weapons", that is, lasers and other directed-energy weapons.

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The United Nations Conference that followed adopted the 1980 Convention on inhumane weapons, which contains certain rules on mines, booby traps, incendiary weapons and weapons that injure by non-detectable fragments. In a resolution, it especially recommended further research on small-calibre weapon systems, and it indicated that further information was necessary for the consideration of other weapons, such as fuel-air explosives.

The structure of the 1980 Convention reflects the fact that the Conference intended it to be the beginning of an ongoing process. To that end, it used the form of a framework supplemented by protocols on different weapons and incorporated an almost automatic review system in order to facilitate the adoption of new protocols or the modification of existing ones.

In recent years, the ICRC has decided to obtain more detailed information on a number of weapons whose anti-personnel use could cause particular humanitarian and legal problems.

In 1989, the ICRC decided to consult with experts on the effects of new laser-weapon technology that could be used in an anti-personnel mode in order to cause blindness. It decided to take that step as a preventive measure because of published reports to the effect that the manufacture of certain new systems, including even portable ones, was foreseen in the next few years.

The ICRC considers this to be a very serious issue because this is the first time that we see a weapon designed specifically to target a critical bodily function so as to leave its victim severely handicapped for the rest of his life.

The ICRC held four meetings of experts in order to study the technical and medical facts, as well as their humanitarian implications. Those meetings confirmed the fact that such weapons can affect only one part of the human

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body, namely, the eyes, that they could be used fairly easily to inflict permanent blindness which would in the vast majority of cases be medically untreatable and that protective measures are inadequate.

The most recent meeting of experts, held in April of this year, could not come to an agreement as to whether some or all uses of blinding weapons would violate international humanitarian law by causing unnecessary suffering or superfluous injury, but a large majority of the participants thought that blinding as a method of waging war should be outlawed.

The ICRC hopes that a resolution to that effect can be adopted at the forthcoming International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to be held at Budapest.

The ICRC has also obtained further information on the effects of small-calibre weapon systems and is of the opinion that real progress can be made in that field by adopting a standardized testing procedure for bullets so that results can be meaningfully compared. This was already recommended by the aforementioned United Nations Conference. However, not only has a standardized procedure not been adopted, but discussions by experts since that time seem to have lost sight of the humanitarian need for such research. Some States have nevertheless modified their ammunition in order to render bullets more stable and less susceptible to fragmentation.

A matter that causes the ICRC serious concern is the extent of mine injuries. ICRC doctors have made a field study of the effects of different types of anti-personnel mines. Although their study could be carried out only on victims who survived to reach hospital, certain types of mines appear to be particularly lethal and others appear to cause severe medical complications.

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The report on weapons that the ICRC has drafted for the forthcoming International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent raises the question whether the military purpose of such mines could be attained with less severe wounding effects and suggests that research on that subject could be usefully undertaken.

The ICRC has likewise obtained further information on the effects of fuel-air explosives and electromagnetic weapons, although its efforts have been hampered by a lack of reliable data. It appears that fuel-air explosives are beginning to become more commonly available, but certain uses could cause serious humanitarian and legal problems. The development of directed-energy weapons appears to be only at the research stage, but there are indications that the biological effects of some of them could undermine the work done to outlaw past and present types of lethal and otherwise poisonous weapons.

The work that the ICRC has undertaken in the field of weapon development has made it clear that efforts in disarmament and in international humanitarian law must go hand in hand. Efforts to outlaw the development and possession of certain weapons help the implementation of humanitarian law in that they prevent the use of such weapons. Conversely, prohibitions or restrictions on the use of a weapon will help restrain the extent of its proliferation. States are in duty bound under international humanitarian law to assess whether the use of a weapon under development would violate the law, and in this era of rapidly advancing technology the development of new weapons is an important issue that needs international intervention.

It is of great importance that advances in disarmament law and international humanitarian law should not be undermined by new inventions that

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escape the letter of the law and run counter to the basic principles of humanitarian law.

In this respect, the ICRC is witnessing with serious concern an increasing indifference to the effects of weapons on soldiers, who are, after all, human beings and not mere objects; indifference to their fate undermines a very fundamental aim of humanitarian law, which from the very beginning attempted to assure the survival and recovery of wounded soldiers.